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The situation in Afghanistan

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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 66/13 and Security Council resolution 2041 (2012), in which the Council requested me to report on developments in Afghanistan every three months.

2. The present report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including significant humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since my previous report of 20 June 2012 (A/66/855-S/2012/462). It also provides a summary of key political and security developments and regional and international events related to Afghanistan.

II. Relevant developments

A. Political developments

3. During the reporting period, the attention of Afghan and international stakeholders was focused on preparations for and follow-up to the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, held on 8 July and co-chaired by the Governments of Japan and Afghanistan. The number of high-level representatives present and scale of financial pledges made at the conference clearly demonstrate that Afghanistan will not be abandoned even as the international military presence draws down. The international community pledged to continue to provide assistance during the transition into the transformation decade of 2015-2024, contingent upon Government progress in key areas.

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4. Before the conference, on 21 June, the President of Afghanistan, Hâmid Karzai, addressed a special joint session of the National Assembly. He pledged to dedicate the remaining two years of his tenure to furthering good governance, accountability and aid effectiveness. Following the conference, on 27 July, he issued a presidential decree in which he set out specific, time-bound actions for Government ministries and agencies, focusing on some aspects of the commitments made at the Tokyo Conference by the Government to countering impunity and corruption and to strengthening Government structures.

5. In the Tokyo Declaration and the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, the Tokyo Conference participants reiterated their commitment to holding credible and inclusive presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015, in accordance with the Constitution. Agreement on the legal and technical framework is now needed. In particular, the passage of the electoral law and the law on the duties and structure of the Independent Election Commission should be secured within the first quarter of 2013, a year before polling. The former is currently with the Ministry of Justice and should, according to the presidential decree of 27 July, be presented to the Council of Ministers by the end of September 2012. The latter, regulating appointments to leadership positions on the Commission, is now with the lower house of the National Assembly. Credible appointees and a consultative process, even if the law is not agreed, are essential to ensuring wider trust in the process. In another development, on 10 July, the Chief Electoral Officer of the Independent Election Commission announced his resignation, while the term of the Commission's current Chair expires in April 2013.

6. At the Commission's request, a three-person voter registry feasibility study team, facilitated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) electoral support project, ELECT II (Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow, second phase), assessed means of improving the voter registry for the next electoral process. The findings of the assessment were presented to the Commission on 31 July. The team recommended that a phased voter registration exercise, tying voters to polling centres, would best help to mitigate against fraud, improve operational planning and provide a sustainable basis for voter identification. After meeting the Commission, the President, on 1 August, expressed his general support, directing that there be discussions with the Ministry of Finance on funding mechanisms. Prospective international donors have requested further information on political, security and other risks and possible mitigation strategies for what would be a costly and ambitious exercise.

7. The next electoral cycle continues to attract intense political interest among Afghan stakeholders. The two major political coalitions, the National Front of Afghanistan and the National Coalition of Afghanistan, have held joint meetings with other groups, including the Right and Justice Party and Hizb-i Islami, and generally favour a greater role for political parties in the electoral framework. On 12 July, Hizb-i Islami, led by Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, also held its own national gathering in Kabul with more than 2,000 attendees, where support for the peace process and the need for active participation in the 2014 polls were stressed. A new regulation issued on 11 July, requiring parties to have offices in 20 provinces to able to register officially, has, however, prompted some concern at potential restrictions on political activity.

8. Considerable diplomatic activity between the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan was focused on cross-border issues. Pakistani officials have complained that armed groups based in Afghanistan are raiding Dir district and Bajaur Agency. On 25 June, the Deputy Ambassador of Afghanistan in Islamabad was summoned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan to receive a strong protest in relation to reports that some 100 militants had crossed the border in Dir the previous evening and killed six Pakistani security force personnel and 11 militia members. On 22 July, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Jawed Ludin, telephoned the Ambassador of Pakistan in Kabul to convey serious concern at alleged shelling in the Province of Kunar by Pakistani forces. On 15 August, the Presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan met in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on the margins of the fourth extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit Conference, organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and agreed to establish a joint military delegation to investigate the incidents. On 25 August, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stated that the leader of the Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-i-Taliban), Maulawi Dadullah, had been among insurgents killed in an air strike in Kunar the previous day.

9. Cross-border shelling in Kunar was one of the reasons stated for the interpellation on 4 August of the ministers of defence and the interior, Abdul Rahim Wardak and Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, by the lower house of the National Assembly. Other criticisms included corruption in both ministries, the lack of respect for the legislature and the performance of the Minister of the Interior. The legislators passed a vote of no confidence in the two ministers. Subsequently, the National Security Council publicly stated its respect for the Assembly's decision and the President instructed both ministers to continue in office as caretakers. On 7 August, Mr. Wardak resigned and was later appointed as Senior Security Adviser to the President.

10. In response to a request from the Government, on 19 July, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) approved the delisting of the Minister of Finance under the Taliban regime, Abdul Wasay Mu'tasim Agha. A total of 20 individuals have been delisted since 17 June 2011, when the measures were imposed. The Security Council is currently reviewing the implementation of the measures established by resolution 1988, to be completed by the end of 2012, with a view to ensuring that mandated tasks and activities are best oriented to support wider peace and stability efforts.

11. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continued to provide analytical, advisory and logistical support to the work of the High Peace Council and, together with UNDP, to the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, which is aimed at drawing lower-level fighters off the battlefield. According to the joint secretariat of the Programme, by mid-August, 5,025 former anti-Government elements had been formally enrolled. Some 10 per cent are now working in the humanitarian demining sector, supported by the United Nations Mine Action Service, and are contributing to fulfilling the Government's obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Their active participation as local community members, concerned for their community, is a positive result of overall rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. Through its membership of the Programme's technical committee, UNAMA continues to

advocate and provide advice on issues relating to vetting, community participation, impunity and security for reintegrated fighters.

12. The High Peace Council, under the chairship of Salahuddin Rabbani, has sought to reinvigorate activities aimed at creating political conditions conducive to a durable peace process. Practical initiatives by the Council to reach out to a wider spectrum of Afghan society, such as women, young people and religious representatives, include the creation of a civil society working group. On 2 July, the Chair and senior members of the Council visited Saudi Arabia and agreed with their Saudi Arabian counterparts on the need to work with Pakistan in advancing the peace process and to utilize the important role of religious scholars and leaders. A planned visit to Pakistan by Council members early in August was, however, postponed, reportedly in response to cross-border shelling in Kunar.

13. More than 150 prominent scholars, civil society activists and religious leaders from across the region gathered in Kabul for the second conference of international Islamic cooperation for a peaceful Afghanistan, at which my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, delivered a keynote speech. On 21 June, the participants issued a final statement in which they condemned suicide bombing and other indiscriminate violence against civilians, including attacks on holy venues, religious ceremonies, marketplaces and public gatherings. Local initiatives also saw the governors of Kandahar and Uruzgan Provinces, with the assistance of UNAMA, hold traditional gatherings. On 2 July, hundreds of religious scholars and tribal elders met in Tirin Kot and released an 11-point declaration in favour of reconciliation. On 15 July, at a similar event in Kandahar, participants adopted a 15-point resolution, emphasizing the need for the rule of law, reform of security agencies and improved outreach by provincial peace committees.

B. Security developments

14. The third tranche of the transition of security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces progressed as planned, with the forces taking responsibility for Kapisa, Kunduz and Uruzgan Provinces, in addition to the entirety of Kandahar Province, covering 75 per cent of the Afghan population. There has been no significant deterioration of public order or security in areas in which the transition has taken place. The Government-mandated Transition Coordination Commission is currently focused on preparations for the final two phases of the transition.

15. Since May, widespread attention has been paid to reports of a popular uprising in the Andar district of Ghazni Province, with violent clashes between the Taliban and other armed actors seeking control of the territory. Amid a complex and evolving conflict, similar reports of resistance against Taliban strictures have been received in Ghor, Laghman, Nangarhar and Nuristan Provinces, with reports of intra-insurgent clashes in Laghman, Logar and Wardak Provinces.

16. The United Nations continued to monitor security-related events relevant to the work, mobility and safety of civilian actors and with the potential to affect the delivery of mandated activities and programmes. The United Nations and its implementing partners were direct and collateral targets in attacks on convoys in Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Herat, Kandahar and Wardak Provinces during the reporting period. On 29 August, a United Nations national staff member was injured when an

improvised explosive device detonated against a United Nations vehicle in the Kaldar district of Balkh Province, although it has not been determined whether the vehicle was targeted. In Badghis, Baghlan, Farah, Herat and Kunar Provinces, national staff were abducted, but released unharmed after the intervention of elders. Threats against national staff were made in Nangarhar Province, while transport facilities used by United Nations personnel were attacked in the cities of Kabul and Kandahar.

17. Overall, recorded security incidents have continued at a lower level than in 2011, with the figures being more comparable to 2010 levels. From 1 May to 31 July, the traditional summer fighting season, 5,190 incidents were recorded, representing a 30 per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2011 (7,470 incidents). This is assessed to be the result of several trends, including interdiction by Afghan and international security forces of insurgents, arms shipments and funding, together with the redeployment of international forces, reducing the likelihood of direct armed clashes. Of all incidents from 1 May to 31 July, 69 per cent took place in the south, south-east and east, mostly in Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar and Nangarhar Provinces.

18. Insurgents have remained focused on infiltrating routes from the south-eastern and eastern provinces towards Kabul. Kunar, Laghman, Logar and Nangarhar Provinces notably recorded an increase in security incidents between 1 May and 31 July, compared to the same period in 2011. Armed clashes and improvised explosive devices constituted the vast majority of events. Suicide attacks slightly decreased, with 32 taking place between 1 May and 31 July, compared to 37 in 2011. In July, the sustained efforts by insurgents notwithstanding, five suicide attacks were recorded, compared to nine in 2011. This reduction was due in part to Afghan and international security forces seizing large amounts of explosives and suicide devices and dismantling suicide attack cells. Security agencies reported that, in July, five planned attacks were thwarted in the cities of Herat, Kabul, Kandahar and Kunduz and that an imminent threat in Kabul was prevented by the interdiction on 2 August of a suicide cell.

19. The complexity and intensity of such planned or executed attacks have been increasing. On 21 June, four attackers armed with light and heavy weaponry launched a 12-hour siege on a lakeside restaurant on the outskirts of Kabul, killing 21 Afghan civilians and 3 Afghan police officers and injuring 7 other civilians. The Taliban, while claiming responsibility, sought to excuse the targeting of a civilian location and population by stating that the restaurant was the site of un-Islamic behaviour.

20. The surge target strength of 157,000 Afghan national police officers and 195,000 Afghan national army personnel by the end of 2012 is ahead of schedule. An estimated 149,000 police officers and 185,000 army personnel were in place by the end of July. To better emphasize the appropriate law enforcement role of the police, the Police-e-Mardumi (Democratic Policing) secretariat — launched by the Ministry of the Interior in April to coordinate community policing initiatives and liaise with civil society so as to increase police accountability and responsiveness — has overseen the creation of dedicated community policing units in eight provinces. Work is now focused on developing a ministerial strategy, curriculum and training programme. Efforts to strengthen the recruitment and capacity of female police officers, critical in ensuring access to justice for women and children, have,

however, lagged behind. UNAMA continues to play an active role in coordinating international resources to assist the Ministry in these efforts and is supporting the involvement of civil society in the reforms. The replacement of private security companies by the Afghan Public Protection Force has seen slow progress, with both the Deputy Minister of the Interior responsible for the project and the Chief Executive Officer replaced during the reporting period.

21. The Afghan local police programme continued to expand. By mid-August, more than 16,266 personnel were operating at 71 validated sites. While these local security forces have contributed to stability in several areas, concerns remain about issues of impunity, vetting, lack of clear command and control, and the potential re-emergence of ethnically or politically biased militias. UNAMA has expressed concern about the appointment of alleged human rights abusers to positions of responsibility and about several reports of abuse involving local police officers. A local police commander from Kunduz was arrested on 23 June following allegations that he had held and repeatedly raped an 18-year-old woman over a period of five days.

22. According to local officials, at least nine Pashtun tribesmen were killed early in August in the southern Province of Uruzgan. The killing is widely believed to have been perpetrated by individuals from the Hazara community who presented themselves as officers of a local defence initiative. This incident followed the deaths of two members of the Hazara community, apparently at the hands of the Taliban. Local government officials are concerned about the spectre of a cycle of ethnically motivated violence and threats by some in the Pashtun community to turn their weapons against the Government if justice is not done.

23. There have been continuing reports of defections from various Afghan security bodies. This includes 17 members of the local police in the north-western Province of Badghis understood to have joined the Taliban on 24 June and a further 93 who switched sides on 3 July. The killing or injuring of colleagues and international counterparts by persons in Afghan uniform is a worrying development affecting trust during a security transition based on close coordination between Afghans and their foreign mentors. Incidents included, on 17 August, a local police recruit, understood to be a former insurgent, opening fire and killing two ISAF personnel on his first day of training in the western Province of Farah. Intra-Afghan incidents included an Afghan policeman killing 10 of his colleagues on 11 August in the south-eastern Province of Nimroz.

C. Regional cooperation

24. Progress was made in regional cooperation and confidence-building in a wide range of areas at the "Heart of Asia" Ministerial Conference, held on 14 June in Kabul, which was the first ministerial-level follow-up meeting to the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan. Attendees included high-level delegations from 14 Heart of Asia nations, 14 supporting countries and 11 regional and international organizations. Among other elements, participants decided to proceed with the implementation of seven priority confidence-building measures: disaster management, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, cooperation between chambers of commerce, commercial

opportunities, regional infrastructure and education. The measures are currently being prepared, developed and implemented.

25. Seeking to build on the Istanbul Process, and ahead of the Tokyo Conference, a summit on investment in Afghanistan was held in New Delhi on 24 June, hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry. Both the Governments of Afghanistan and India were represented by key ministers, with more than 500 participants from 33 countries and some 150 Indian and 85 Afghan companies demonstrating their commitment to assisting Afghanistan and its economic development.

26. On 7 July, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan chaired a meeting of senior officials at which the participants laid the groundwork for an ambassadorial-level meeting in Kabul, held on 23 July, at which countries taking the lead on the various confidence-building measures agreed to designate focal points expeditiously and work with regional technical groups to draft implementation plans. Support by United Nations agencies, funds and programmes was confirmed. On 3 September, the regional technical group on counter-terrorism met in Ankara, with the Governments of Afghanistan, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates taking the lead.

27. On 19 July, the President of Afghanistan held a meeting in Kabul with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Raja Pervez Ashraf and Hina Rabbani Khar. The Pakistani delegation reaffirmed its support for the peace process and pledged to step up efforts to facilitate direct intra-Afghan contacts and negotiations. On 3 July, in a telephone call with her Pakistani counterpart, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Hillary Rodham Clinton, expressed regret for the tragic incident in November 2011 in which 24 Pakistani troops had been killed. On the same day, Pakistan announced the reopening of North Atlantic Treaty Organization supply routes into Afghanistan.

28. The assassination, on 21 July, of the head of State security in Kuhistoni Badakhshon Province, Tajikistan, and the subsequent army operations in that country have had a cross-border impact on Badakhshan Province in northern Afghanistan. The reported presence of Tajik extremist groups on the Afghan side led to fears that they would seek to exploit the instability. On 26 July, the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, and the Minister of the Interior of Afghanistan met to discuss joint border security. Tajikistan closed its border during the military operations, affecting the movement of Afghans living in the mountainous Badakhshan region. UNAMA liaised throughout the events with Afghan and Tajik provincial and consular officials, including with regard to humanitarian access.

29. My Special Representative conducted official visits to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation during the reporting period. At a meeting on 28 June in Astana, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, reaffirmed his Government's proactive support for regional cooperation, including in the framework of the Istanbul Process. At meetings in Moscow from 13 to 15 August, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, and other senior officials conveyed strong Russian concerns regarding drug production and trafficking. Regional dynamics were the focus of the meetings in Bishkek from 5 to 7 September.

III. Human rights

30. A 4 per cent decrease in civilian casualties was recorded between 1 May and 31 July compared to the same period in 2011. UNAMA documented 2,378 civilian casualties (930 people killed and 1,448 injured) over the three-month period, compared to 2,466 civilian casualties (1,029 people killed and 1,437 injured) in 2011. In particular, there has been a significant reduction in civilian casualties resulting from suicide attacks and ground engagements between pro-Government forces and anti-Government elements. Insurgents bore responsibility for 85 per cent of civilian casualties, up from 78 per cent for the same period in 2011, and pro-Government forces for 7 per cent, down from 12 per cent in 2011. Some 9 per cent of civilian casualties could not be attributed to any party.

31. A message was sent, allegedly by Mullah Omar, to mark Eid al-Fitr, the end of the holy month of Ramadan, in which he urged Taliban fighters not to harm civilians, terming it a religious duty. Similarly, the leader of the Hizb-i Islami faction, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, made a public statement for the occasion in which he emphasized the protection of civilians. Contrary to such rhetoric, attacks continued in locations frequented by ordinary citizens and the targeted killings of civilians increased. During Ramadan, there were at least five attacks targeting imams in mosques. The deadliest day to date in 2012 was 14 August, with violent incidents recorded throughout the country, several targeting shoppers, resulting in more than 200 civilians being killed or injured. In an incident reported on 27 August, 17 civilians, including 2 women, were reportedly killed in Helmand Province in gruesome circumstances, several of them beheaded. UNAMA issued a statement in which it strongly condemned the reprehensible act and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. On 1 September, a double suicide attack in Sayedabad, Wardak Province, killed at least eight civilians. Following an attack by a lone suicide bomber, an extremely large truck bomb exploded, levelling the district administrative centre and damaging surrounding buildings.

32. Between 1 May and 31 July, the targeted killings of civilians, including Government officials and workers, community elders and religious actors, also rose, leaving 231 people dead and 139 injured. This figure represents an 88 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2011, when 162 people were killed and 35 injured. The threefold increase in injuries may in part be attributed to the increased use of improvised explosive devices in targeted killings. On 13 July, the head of the Department of Women's Affairs in Laghman Province, Hanifa Safi, was killed by a remote-controlled explosive device and members of her family injured. A suicide attack on 14 July on a wedding party in the northern Province of Samangan targeted a local parliamentarian and strongman, Ahmad Khan Samangani, also killing the regional police commander, the provincial head of the National Directorate of Security and 23 other civilians. No insurgent group has claimed responsibility, with competing theories about the perpetrator and motives amid complex inter-factional and intra-factional tensions. On the pro-Government side, civilian deaths and injuries caused by air strikes, night raids and other military operations decreased significantly. Air raids continued to cause more civilian casualties than any other tactic used by pro-Government forces.

33. Harmful traditional practices, particularly affecting women and girls, remain endemic. Following significant remonstrations by local women's groups and civil society at large, on 24 June, the Minister of Justice apologized for comments in

which he had referred to women's shelters as sites of immorality. UNAMA reiterated its support for such shelters, which provide critical support for vulnerable Afghan women and girls. UNAMA has expressed concerns over continuing extrajudicial and honour killings of women in Afghanistan. Early in July, the filmed public execution by the Taliban of a 22-year-old woman over allegations of adultery in Parwan Province triggered a global outcry. Civil society groups underscored fears that the international military drawdown could adversely affect gains made by Afghan women during the past decade. In a statement issued on 24 July, a consortium of groups called for a visit by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

34. In line with activist lobbying by women's civil society groups, several officials were prosecuted for violence against women, including a prison director in Logar Province, who was convicted of raping a 15-year-old girl in 2010 and sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment. On 17 and 18 July, the N-Peace Network, a platform to support the leadership of women in building peace, was launched in Kabul. Facilitated by the United Nations, 35 women leaders came together and agreed that the peace process and access to justice were immediate priorities for the N-Peace action plan for 2012-2013.

35. On 27 June, the media watchdog (Nai Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan) and a number of journalists' associations and unions, with the support of UNAMA, convened media representatives from around the country to discuss draft amendments to the Mass Media Act. There is concern that the proposals being developed by the Ministry of Information and Culture risk curtailing freedom of speech and increasing Government control of the media. The presidential decree of 27 July also contains language that can potentially restrict the right to receive and impart information, with the media ordered to "refrain from anti-State propaganda and anything that may lead to negative motivations or misguiding youth".

IV. Implementation of the Kabul process and aid coherence

36. On 26 June, in the lead-up to the Tokyo Conference, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, co-chaired by the Government of Afghanistan and UNAMA, met and endorsed the Government's paper entitled "Towards self-reliance — strategic vision for the transformation decade" and five national priority programmes. The paper sets out a road map for Afghanistan to consolidate a fully functioning, sustainable State in the service of its people. It focuses on progressively reducing dependence on foreign assistance and commits the Government to achieving human development and the Millennium Development Goals.

37. The Tokyo Declaration and the Tokyo Framework, adopted at the Conference, focused Government commitments on five key areas: democracy and equitable elections; rule of law and human rights, including a particular focus on women's rights; public finance and commercial banking; budget execution and subnational governance; and inclusive and sustained growth. Similarly, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to channelling 50 per cent of its development assistance through the national budget of the Government of Afghanistan, aligning 80 per cent of aid with national priority programmes and to finalizing and endorsing, through the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, the Government's aid management policy by December 2012.

38. At a donor meeting held on 31 July in Kabul, the Ministry of Finance presented a concept paper on implementing the Tokyo Framework. This was welcomed by the international community as a positive step in setting the post-Tokyo agenda with a clear focus on mutual accountability. The paper will be further developed to include a focus on agreeing upon appropriate aid architecture, building on the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, for sustained policy dialogue. To date, 16 national priority programmes have been endorsed by the Board, demonstrating consensus among the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners on policy orientation in priority sectors. Work will intensify on the final six programmes, with the aim of their endorsement by the Board in October.

39. Civil society played a strong and constructive role in the discussions leading up to, and at, the Tokyo Conference. A platform of 25 local organizations, including all major umbrella organizations, several women's groups, a major trade union and a youth organization, formed a civil society joint working group. This group elected Afghan civil society delegates to be sent to Tokyo, liaised with the Japanese non-governmental organizations steering committee and drafted a position paper in which it was emphasized that security, accountability and good governance were essential to sustainable development and that civil society actors must play a constructive role in a self-reliant Afghanistan.

40. On 29 June, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund completed the first review of Afghanistan's economic performance under the extended credit facility arrangements. Progress on reform objectives was noted. On the Kabul Bank issue (where concerns over the soundness of the Bank led to a significant withdrawal of its deposits in 2010 and its eventual audit and placement under receivership), the Afghan authorities reported some cash recoveries. No shareholder has, however, paid in full and cases have been referred to a special tribunal and the Financial Disputes Resolution Commission.

V. Governance and rule of law

41. Before the Tokyo Conference, UNAMA facilitated consultative meetings between donors to help to finalize the national priority programme on local governance, which was endorsed on 26 June. Support for subnational governance will become increasingly important as provincial reconstruction teams cease work. UNAMA has been assisting the Government to develop and coordinate implementation plans and to finalize and endorse the programmes on accountability and transparency and on effective and efficient governance.

42. In an important development for institutional efforts to tackle corruption, the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee reached its full complement of five members in July. International members visited Afghanistan from 6 to 20 July as part of the sixth mission of the Committee, which included consultations with Government officials and representatives of the international community and civil society. The Committee approved 17 additional benchmarks and recommendations, bringing the totals to 73 and 74, respectively. Recommended measures included strengthening the oversight role of civil society, greater oversight of border control, a public awareness campaign focused on religious strictures against corrupt practices, adherence to restrictions on

subcontracting and the highlighting of specific organizations and projects where audits were recommended.

43. Although efforts continued to finalize the national priority programme on law and justice for all, a revised draft is not expected to be ready for endorsement by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in October. While recognizing that the complexity of the justice sector makes the development of such a programme particularly difficult, it is of concern that, two years after the Kabul Conference, there is to date no endorsed programme in this crucial area. In the meantime, UNAMA has been working with donors to provide the Government with an overview of expected support to the justice programme. Steady progress is being made on legislative reform of the justice sector. The newly drafted Criminal Procedure Code was presented to the National Assembly on 30 June and is expected to be placed on the legislative agenda soon. The period also saw the creation of several working groups to revise the Penal Code. Appointments of a new Chief Justice and one member of the Supreme Court, whose terms expired two years ago, are pending.

44. The transfer of detainees from the Parwan detention facility, which is under the control of the United States military, to the custody of the Afghan authorities continues under the memorandum of understanding of March 2012 between the two Governments. Up to 100 juveniles were transferred to the Kabul Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre, highlighting concerns about overcrowding and the security risks that may arise by placing high-risk juveniles in a facility not intended to house high-level security detainees. UNAMA has emphasized to the Government the need to separate this group from other juveniles under detention and to ensure that additional security measures are provided.

VI. Development and humanitarian assistance

45. In June 2012, the Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan joined his counterparts around the world in signing a pledge to support ending preventable child deaths, consistent with the Secretary-General's Every Woman Every Child initiative. The pledge will help to sharpen the Afghan national plan for child survival, monitor results and focus greater attention on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children. On 27 June, the Central Statistics Organization released the multiple indicator cluster survey for 2010-2011. Conducted with United Nations support, the survey showed that almost 1 million children under 5 years of age were acutely malnourished. Significant progress was seen in most indicators relating to women and children when compared to the previous survey, carried out in 2003. A total of 57 per cent of the population enjoyed improved access to drinking water, and 63 per cent of boys and 46 per cent of girls of primary education age were attending school. Major disparities remained apparent, however, in access: health personnel attended 74 per cent of women who gave birth in towns in 2008-2009, while the rate dropped to 30.5 per cent for those in rural areas. A woman's level of education was the most reliable predictor of nearly all indicators: for example, 45 per cent of women with secondary or higher education received antenatal care, compared to 11.8 per cent of uneducated women.

46. The operationalization of a nutrition action framework to tackle maternal and child undernutrition was backed by the Second Vice-President, Karim Khalili, who will oversee its implementation. Developed by the ministries of education, public

health, commerce, agriculture and rural rehabilitation, with the support of the United Nations and the World Bank, it aims at preventing stunting, with a focus on the 1,000 days following conception. On 23 and 24 July, poliomyelitis was the subject of a meeting between Afghan and Pakistani officials in Kabul. According to data from August, there have been 17 confirmed cases of poliomyelitis in Afghanistan in 2012, most of which were recorded in Helmand, Kandahar and Kunar Provinces. At the meeting, hosted by the Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan, the participants outlined a joint plan to strengthen cross-border coordination, including the immunization of children in insecure border areas and the vaccination of populations moving between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

47. Together with the ministries of refugees and repatriation, rural development, agriculture and labour and social welfare, the United Nations is finalizing a joint voluntary return and reintegration programme for refugees, which will implement the Afghan component of the May 2012 solutions strategy for Afghan refugees to support voluntary repatriation, sustainable reintegration and assistance to host countries. Managed by the Government, it will pursue sustainable reintegration through a community-based approach within the national priority programme framework. It aims to improve access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, protection and institutional capacity-building over a four-year period in 48 high-return areas.

48. The importance of sustainable return and reintegration of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons was highlighted during a high-level event sponsored by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the margins of the Tokyo Conference and in the Tokyo Declaration. Similarly, at the "Heart of Asia" Ministerial Conference, participants recommended according priority to the implementation of a confidence-building measure on refugees in the next phase of the Istanbul Process.

49. As at 30 June, some 425,000 persons (around 65,000 families) had been displaced by conflict, nearly one quarter of whom had been newly displaced in 2012 (a 14 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2011). Against this backdrop of rising internal displacement, the Government requested the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation to develop a national policy to tackle the causes of displacement, to strengthen prevention, protection and assistance and to develop durable solutions. To support this comprehensive approach, and to begin raising the awareness of major stakeholders, including provincial authorities and representatives of the displaced, a national consultative workshop was held on 14 and 15 July. It was attended by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, during his mission to Afghanistan, to raise political support for the new policy. On 29 August, my Deputy Special Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator visited Jalalabad to discuss, in particular, the displacement of hundreds of families resulting from recent security events in Kunar Province.

50. Natural disasters, such as flooding, earthquakes, avalanches, extreme weather, landslides and mudflows, continued to affect already vulnerable segments of the Afghan population. From 1 June to 31 July, the United Nations recorded 58 natural disaster events in 57 districts, affecting 31,783 individuals, causing 116 deaths and destroying 2,046 homes. In welcome news, following the 2011 drought, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock estimates that national cereal production

will reach 6.3 million tons in 2012, which would be the second-largest harvest in 35 years and represent an increase of 42 per cent compared to the harvest of 2011.

VII. Counter-narcotics

51. On 26 June, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board endorsed the Counter-Narcotics Monitoring Mechanism, to be co-chaired by the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The mechanism will, as its first priority, map all counter-narcotics activities within existing national priority programmes and note other activities under the programmes that are relevant to counter-narcotics outcomes. The Ministry will also now be represented at meetings of the Board and its Standing Committee and in relevant Kabul Process forums. The Mechanism's work and decisions will be informed by the revised national drug control strategy and by existing approaches of the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, including with regard to alternative livelihoods, drug demand reduction, law enforcement, public awareness and institution-building.

52. On 20 June, the Ministry marked the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking with a ceremony at Amani High School in Kabul attended by high-level national and international stakeholders. The Minister of Counter-Narcotics, Zarar Ahmad Moqbel Osmani, emphasized that there was a need for increased control over precursor chemicals and enhanced regional and international efforts. The Government-led eradication force is estimated to have removed 10,282 hectares of poppy in 2012 (not including figures from Badakhshan, where quality checks are continuing), a figure that is already a 170 per cent increase compared to that for 2011 (3,810 hectares).

53. On 27 June in New York, UNODC and the Government of Afghanistan organized a briefing and exchange session on regional cooperation on counter-narcotics, aimed at intensifying support for the Governments of Afghanistan and its neighbours to translate agreed regional cooperation objectives into specific actions. Presided over by the Executive Director of UNODC, the participants included the Minister of Counter-Narcotics and the head of the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan. Discussion included strengthening the operational aspects of existing efforts such as the Triangular Initiative between Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and other regional mechanisms.

VIII. Mission support

54. UNAMA continued to reconfigure the Mission to best meet its mandate in the current and anticipated political, security and financial environment, guided by the outcomes of the comprehensive review conducted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1974 (2011), the subsequent renewal of the mandate by the Council in its resolution 2041 (2012) and funding levels approved for special political missions by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/248. The substantial reductions to its 2013 budget, currently expected to be in the range of between 18 and 19 per cent, required to meet the overall funding levels approved by the General Assembly for the biennium 2012-2013, added urgency and clear financial parameters to the debate. Extensive consultations were conducted within the Mission and with the United Nations country team, given the implications for the United Nations system

as a whole. A reduced footprint and fewer resources will necessarily affect operational capacity and underline the need to focus on core strategic goals. A programme criticality exercise is being undertaken by the United Nations system in Afghanistan to review and define essential activities of the Mission and the United Nations country team, in addition to effective, flexible and secure modalities to implement their respective mandates.

55. Key operational elements of the Mission's configuration include the closure of nine provincial offices, a reduction of approximately 25 per cent of the authorized international and national staff (629 positions) and an adjustment to the Mission's logistical support, including a reduction in the number of air assets from 10 to 7. The currently authorized number of military and police advisers has also been revised downwards. Provincial offices in Badghis, Ghor, Nimroz and Zabul Provinces ceased operation during the reporting period, and those in Daykundi, Kunar, Sari Pul, Takhar and Uruzgan Provinces will be closed by the end of 2012. Some premises will be taken over by agencies, funds and programmes, as was the case in Ghor Province. National reach remains at the core of the Mission's mandated activities, but will now be carried out more flexibly, with regional offices functioning as hubs with logistical and substantive capacity to cover adjacent provinces, wherever possible.

56. Previously planned investments in core infrastructure, where essential to ensure operational standards for staff safety and security, have proceeded. Construction work is progressing on the offices in Balkh and Bamyan Provinces, which are expected to be functional by October. The only major new infrastructural investment envisaged is linked to the relocation, for security reasons, of the office in Kunduz from the current compound. UNAMA will continue to relocate functions to Kuwait. In this regard, the establishment of an integrated back office with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq continues to move forward with the integration of finance and human resources units as part of the initial phase.

57. The proposed organizational reconfiguration also includes the creation of a civil affairs unit, drawing together the governance and development coherence units of the Mission. Furthermore, the Child Protection Unit will be merged with the Human Rights Unit, while maintaining all required reporting lines to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. UNAMA and UNDP will step up collaboration in the justice sector, in line with the joint Department of Peacekeeping Operations-UNDP guidance on rule of law, with greater strategic alignment and enhanced collaboration in provincial activities. The UNAMA training centre will continue to partner with local and regional institutions to build national capacity and to concentrate efforts on bringing international consultants into the Mission.

IX. Observations

58. The Tokyo Conference further consolidated the commitments of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to an enduring partnership. Mutual obligations outlined in Bonn, Germany, at the United Nations talks on Afghanistan, in December 2001, and reiterated during the discussions on Afghanistan at the summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization held in Chicago, United States, in May 2012, are now complemented by the Tokyo

Framework. I congratulate the Government on its excellent preparation of the event and its drive to develop ways to implement its outcomes; and I welcome the generous pledges by international partners to provide more than $16 billion of financial aid until 2015 and to sustain support until 2017 at, or near, the levels of the past decade. The finalization of outstanding programmes, agreement on a reinvigorated Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board architecture and the adoption of the aid management policy now require sustained attention. The operationalization of these commitments must focus on realizing the ultimate goal: an irreversible path to self-reliance, legitimate Government structures, service delivery and stability.

59. Demonstrable progress on the indicators in the Tokyo Framework is essential. Properly sequenced national priority programmes must now evolve into vehicles for tangible development results. Mainstreaming counter-narcotics efforts through the endorsement of the Monitoring Mechanism, the Tokyo Conference outcomes and the presidential decree of 27 July are all positive steps in recognizing the cross-cutting nature of this issue. In tackling corruption, greater official support is needed for the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee for it to fulfil its mandate, while progress on repayments and prosecutions relating to the failed Kabul Bank are required. In turn, the international community, including the United Nations family, must provide predictable assistance in ways that strengthen national ownership and capacity.

60. As donors repeatedly stressed in Tokyo, the protection and promotion of gains in human rights and, especially, women's rights are essential. In this regard, the implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women Act and the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan will be key indicators. As highlighted in the multiple indicator cluster survey, commitment to women's empowerment is ultimately an investment in development outcomes.

61. The importance of the next round of elections to the political transition was also a central focus in Tokyo. It must be a fair contest, free of internal and external interference, in which Afghans throughout the country are able to register and cast their vote. Unhindered possibilities for vigorous debate among political parties and civil society, with the media free to report, are essential aspects of political pluralism. The intense national and international attention needs to be harnessed, with the lead time used to agree on and consolidate credible and independent institutions, frameworks and processes. Strong leadership by the Independent Election Commission is critical to donor confidence and, most importantly, to the credibility of the process. The current UNDP ELECT II project provides capacity-building and technical assistance. The United Nations stands ready to undertake, upon request from the Afghan authorities, a needs assessment mission to determine the potential operationalization of election support.

62. Improvements in the security situation have been registered against the record high incident levels of 2011. These gains have not, however, generated public perceptions of greater security and do not reflect improvements to the institutional structures required for longer-term stability. Little has changed in the underlying dynamics to mitigate a deep-seated cycle of conflict. Furthermore, a diminished international presence will have a significant financial impact in many areas that, at least in the short term, may even exacerbate predatory behaviour, with a reduced flow of money encouraging criminality. The Government and international community need to work together to mitigate security and humanitarian risks

resulting from economic shrinkage. In close coordination with major stakeholders and within the bounds of its limited resources, the United Nations will seek to assist Afghans in filling the gaps that may arise as the transition accelerates.

63. The security transition to date has proceeded as planned and expected. To avoid a potential protracted conflict, or increased instability and fragmentation, appreciation appears to be growing among key stakeholders of the urgent need to explore an intra-Afghan accommodation. Signs are emerging of an interest in dialogue, with appropriate interlocutors, from some Taliban elements. Providing good offices in support of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process remains a core priority of UNAMA. I support greater alignment of the sanction regime under resolution 1988 (2011) with Afghan peace and reconciliation frameworks. Specifically, the process for travel ban exemptions could be a useful tool for furthering peace efforts. Religious actors and institutions will also play a critical role in furthering reconciliation and the promotion of peace, and UNAMA is continuing to enhance its outreach capacity and activities in this area.

64. Although the reduction in civilian casualties is welcome, gains are fragile and continue to represent a significant human tragedy. The vast majority of civilian casualties stems from the use by anti-Government elements of pressure-plate improvised explosive devices, suicide attacks and targeted killings of civilians, including men and women actively pursuing peace and reconciliation. Perpetrators, organizers and internal and external sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism must understand that they can eventually be brought to justice for their actions in violation of international law and relevant Security Council resolutions. I particularly call upon anti-Government elements to allow humanitarian organizations access to communities and to express public commitment in support of vaccination campaigns.

65. Some effective steps taken by pro-Government forces to reduce civilian casualties should be recognized. As Afghan security forces assume increasing responsibility, establishing a civilian casualty mitigation team in the Afghan army to ensure timely investigations and accurate incident tracking will be an important continuation of such efforts. Accountability is vital for building public confidence in the Afghan forces that have the responsibility to protect the population and for reinforcing the rule of law. Clear lines of command and control are essential, and UNAMA continues to engage stakeholders over concerns about the Afghan local police, in particular.

66. Given the depth of humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, following the midyear review, the consolidated appeals process increased to $448 million to address the life-saving needs of approximately 8.8 million people. It is worrying that, as at 1 August, funding stood at 33.5 per cent, less than half the amount that was available during the same period in 2011.

67. The Istanbul Process has reinvigorated and strengthened the coherence of regional support, helping to redefine regional assistance to Afghanistan based on mutual self-interest, rather than as a charitable act. The level of engagement by Heart of Asia countries and its supporters has outpaced initial expectations, owing to the strong multilateral character of the process, with regional participation, Afghan leadership and international support. I particularly thank those neighbouring countries and participant nations that have committed themselves to taking the lead

on the various confidence-building measures agreed in the framework of the Istanbul Process.

68. The reconfiguration of UNAMA amid a substantial decrease in resources will necessarily affect operational capacity and mandate implementation. In the light of the expectations of the Government of Afghanistan, civil society and Member States surrounding the post-2014 role and responsibilities of the Mission and the wider United Nations system, constructive debate is required. Downsizing is in no way a prelude to exit. The United Nations has been a strong partner of Afghanistan for 60 years and its commitment to a peaceful and secure future for the nation and its people remains undiminished.

69. I should like, once again, to express my gratitude to all national and international United Nations staff members in Afghanistan, and, in particular, to my Special Representative, Ján Kubiš, for their continuing efforts and dedication, the challenging circumstances notwithstanding, to support the people of Afghanistan.